

In Defense of Solidarity - Why Stand with Tigray?

By Tsegaye R Ararssa | <http://shorturl.at/achjJ>

People who have seen us denounce the atrocities in Tigray ask why we stand with Tigray. Here is why:

1. We stand with Tigray because in principle -- and also under the current circumstances -- it is the right thing to do. It is the morally appropriate thing to do.

Our humanity demands that we take a position against the mass murder of civilians; the ethnic cleansing; the weaponized rape of women and children; the looting and vandalizing of private, public, and government properties; the wanton destruction of properties, sacred sites, infrastructures, and the natural environment; the mass starvation; the displacement; the public torture and abuse; the denial of access to health facilities and humanitarian aid; and the general evil being inflicted upon the peoples of Tigray. We express our human indignation against the brutalities hurled down at them. This is as much about standing with principles as it is with the Tegraru.

2. We also stand with Tigray out of rational self-interest.

That is to say that, in standing in solidarity with Tigray's struggle (for justice, democratic self-rule, human rights, the rule of law, constitutionalism, equality, self-determination, and peace), we stand for our own values, ideals, and national aspirations. To the extent that Tigrayans are struggling for these values, their struggle is our struggle. Their fights are our fights. Their slogans are our slogans, albeit expressed in a different language.

3. In addition, we stand in solidarity with Tigray because we have similar strategic goals and interests.

Like us, they are committed to the right of nations to self-determination (whether it is implemented within a federalist framework or in an altogether independentist frame) as enshrined in article 39 of the FDRE (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) constitution. For a multinational country of uneven historical relations among groups, this is a commitment to a right moral and political imperative. This imperative secures non-dominance in the polity and guarantees lasting peace for the entire region.

Standing in solidarity with Tigray on these issues is the same as standing for progressive emancipatory politics in Ethiopia and beyond. It is standing for restoring and preserving collective agency, attending to the weak and the downtrodden, securing social justice for all, and nurturing peaceful coexistence among groups. In so doing, we stand on the right side of the otherwise checkered Ethiopian history.

4. Standing in solidarity with Tigray is not driven by tactical reasons.

It is not a solidarity of convenience or one driven by the imperative of resisting a common enemy. We don't do it on the grounds that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." No, we don't stand together because we have the same enemy. We stand together because we have similar popular causes.

Let it be clear to all: ours is not a tactical alliance. Ours is not an alliance of partners who are joined by hatred of another (like the Abiy-Isayas alliance) or one united by the goal of wresting power from an undeserving adversary (like the alliance called Oromara). Ours is not an inter-elite pact (like the one between the OPDO and ANDM; or the one between Abiy and Isayas). It's an inter-popular solidarity moved by the common quest for justice, rights, and dignity.

Ours is not a power-pact among the powerful political elite. Nor is it an alliance of hatred, of the hateful, forged as a war pact against a common 'enemy'. It is a coming together of people who love and die for similar just causes, who long for common ideals and shared aspirations.

5. In standing in solidarity with Tigray, we re-affirm and stand for our own quest for justice.

In marching with them, we affirm and express our moral indignation against the injustice we all languish under. As we do, we respond to the call of conscience. As we do, we reckon our frailty in the face of state-produced human suffering. As we bear witness to our frailty (even our common mortality) in the face of evil (such as the one being inflicted by Abiy and co), we reckon our common humanity.

In this reckoning, we see (and show) that we are not alone. In standing in solidarity with Tigray, we make the immensely ethical statement that they are not alone. They shall not be alone.

In the end, whatever we do when we stand in solidarity with others that have just causes, we do it for ourselves.

When I stand with Tigray today, I do it for me. Because we do it for ourselves, we do it sensitively (attending, with care, to the wounds of the past), humbly (not condescendingly), and conscientiously (not messianically).

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